**CoreGroup Guide | His Name Shall Be Called - Part 1**
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**Welcome**

Long before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah offered a vision for an ideal leader, specifically giving them four names: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. In Christianity, we believe these names also define Jesus, a different type of leader. In a culture that offers competing stories about the true identity of Jesus, we look to scripture to remember what God has been showing us all along. This Advent, find comfort in sitting with these names, one at a time, asking what they mean to a people waiting in the dark, and what they still mean to us today. This week, we'll focus on Jesus as our Wonderful Counselor.

**Opening Prayer**

Jesus as Wonderful Counselor,
Thank you for your guidance in our lives. You are "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), and offer us hope for the world. Be in the midst of our conversation. Inspire us to learn more about you. Bless our group as we meet together. As we start the Advent season, help us to keep you at the center.
Amen.

**Ice Breaker**

As we discuss Jesus as "Wonderful Counselor," what's your favorite piece of advice you've ever received or heard?

**The Head**

Today, we're beginning a new series, *His Name Shall Be Called*. The title comes from a now famous prophecy from the Bible book and prophet, Isaiah, that Christians have interpreted in light of Jesus. This passage is read often at Christmas.

**Isaiah 9:2, 9:6**

*The people who walked in darkness*
*have seen a great light;*
*those who lived in a land of deep darkness—*
*on them light has shined.*

*For a child has been born for us,*
*a son given to us;*
*authority rests upon his shoulders,*
*and he is named*
*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,*
*Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

The Jewish people were divided into two countries by war, led by corrupt rulers, and oppressed under empire 700 years before Jesus' birth. During this time, Isaiah was a prophet – someone who God puts words in their mouth, and then tells their people everything God commands them (Deut 18:18). Despite adversity, Isaiah stayed strong in speaking God's words and promises. His prophetic book provides a vision of a coming ruler who offers hope, freedom, and peace. This ruler would be a "Wonderful Counselor," which meant a leader who made wise plans that benefit all people who they lead.

- Why might God promise a "Wonderful Counselor" through a prophet like Isaiah?
- Why was that important for the Jewish people?

Theologians read Isaiah's prophecy for someone transcendent of earthly leaders who would reign forever and identify Jesus as our eternal leader in difficult times, our light in the darkness. Jesus is a counselor, a wise guide. He's someone to turn to when we're afraid and anxious. In fact, Jesus' birth was ushered in by this promise of comfort and peace. We see the message of "do not be afraid" many times in his birth story in Luke when the angels visited Zachariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds (Luke 1:13-2:10). We even recognize the everlasting promise today that Jesus is *our* wonderful counselor.

- How did Jesus show he was a wise leader and guide; a "Wonderful Counselor" during his ministry?
- Why was this important for the people who encountered him during his time here on earth?

**The Heart**

When we think of the word "Counselor" we may think of someone who:

- loves you.
- wants what is best for you.
- won't just tell you what you want to hear.
- offers judgment you can trust and advice that is solid.
- tells you the truth.
- is dependable and present.

Think of this list and the word "Counselor" in today's context. Often, this word is used to refer to people like lawyers, therapists, and financial advisors. They're given these names because they offer guidance to their clients. However, you don't need to have the job, "Counselor," to offer these things to others. Think of people who fill this role in your life.

- What does the word "counselor" mean to you?
- How has your life been impacted by the counsel you have received from others?
- How is Jesus a "Wonderful Counselor" to you?
- As you reflect on the list above, which attributes of a "Wonderful Counselor" could you use most during this Advent season?

**The Hands**

Isaiah 9 isn't the only place in the Bible where God is called a Counselor. In John 14, we also see Jesus promising that the disciples will continue to be guided, even after he dies. He says:

*"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you" (John 14:15-17).*

The word "Counselor" in Greek is *paraklétos* and can also be defined as "Advocate," "Companion," "Helper," and "Friend." This shows the Trinity (God as 3 persons-in-1 being; Creator, Son, Holy Spirit) at work as a "Wonderful Counselor" for all of us, even today as we still have the Holy Spirit.

- How is the Holy Spirit your Counselor this holiday season?
- How can you be open to the movement of the Spirit, even when things feel stressful?
- Have you ever been a "Wonderful Counselor" to someone else in your life? What did you share?
- How can you be a "Wonderful Counselor" to others this Christmas time? Do you plan to support a friend, a family member, or a person in need? How can you be there for your CoreGroup members?

**Closing Prayer**

In what ways can your CoreGroup be a Counselor this season and pray for you? **Name your prayer requests now.**

Holy Spirit as Wonderful Counselor,
Thank you for being our paraklete, our guide, our counselor. During this holiday season, we feel excited or worried or stressed or lonely. We pray that you can plead our needs for us when we don't know what to pray. Even if all we have are unexpressed groans, we know that you are with us even there. Amen.

As you pray, remember that *"in the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans." (Romans 8:26).*

During this Christmas season, as you feel stress or loneliness, take hope from the promise that the Holy Spirit is our counselor, pleading with unexpressed groans with and for us.

*Practice:* **Take a deep breath.** Remember that the Holy Spirit pleads for us with unexpressed groans.

**References**

Brueggemann, Walter. *Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study*. Westminster John Knox, 2016.

"I'll raise up a prophet for them from among their fellow Israelites—one just like you. I'll put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."
(Deuteronomy 18:18)

**Going Deeper with Isaiah**

Isaiah was a prophet 700 years before Jesus was born. In the 8th century BCE, the Jewish people were torn into two countries, Israel and Judah (see map - waiting for it), by war. Isaiah exhorted King Ahaz of Judah to trust God in the middle of all the conflict. Ahaz stayed in his fear and cut a deal with the Assyrian empire for protection. They conquered and oppressed parts of Israel and Judah became an Assyrian state. Their freedom was gone.

Isaiah stayed strong in speaking God's words and promises. His prophetic book offers a vision of a ruler who offers hope, freedom, and peace (Isaiah 9:6). Many scholars immediately see this promise pointing toward the next king, Hezekiah, who would be successful in bringing those things for Judah… but only for a short time. Eventually, Hezekiah gave in to another empire and the oppression and darkness started again.

Like many earthly rulers, Hezekiah did not live up to Isaiah's prophecy, resulting in later theologians and Christians to look to someone who's transcendent of earthly leaders who would reign forever. Christians see these names as identifying Jesus as our eternal leader in difficult times, our light in the darkness.

**From Pastor Charity**

Advent is the 4-week season in the church calendar that leads up to Christmas. It is a time of preparation, waiting, and remembering what (and who) we celebrate during the chaos of the holiday season. If you haven't done so already, click HERE to subscribe to The Gathering's 2026 Advent devotional.

Our **Shared Practice** for this series is **INVITE**. Each week, we'll hear a name for Jesus that can bring inspiration into our life. During the holiday season, you may know someone who could use this hope. During your CoreGroup, name one person you'd like to invite. After your CoreGroup, send a text message or schedule a coffee with that person to invite them to worship with you this Christmas season.